



SWANSON LAKES WILDLIFE AREA 2009 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Land Management Summary

This is an annual update to the 2006 Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area Management Plan [Wildlife Area Mngt Plan Update SLWA 2009-final.doc](#) that provides management direction for the Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area (SLWA), totaling about 21,000 acres in central Lincoln County. The plan identifies needs and guides activities on the area based on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) Mission of "*Sound Stewardship of Fish and Wildlife*" and its underlying statewide goals and objectives as they apply to local conditions.

Plans are updated annually as habitat and species conditions change, as new regulations and scientific knowledge develop, as public issues and concerns evolve, and as administration of wildlife areas change. This management plan update also includes 2008 accomplishments, new issues, new land management strategies and performance measures for 2009. This update also includes background describing Bonneville Power Administration's (BPA) involvement and funding of the wildlife area.

Updates/Changes

SLWA staff did not conduct any restoration work at the Huck/Phantom Butte CRP fields in 2008. SLWA staff has been busy with planning and executing farm field restoration work off-site, at Reardan Audubon Ponds WLA, Revere WLA, and under contract on adjacent BLM lands.

Swanson Lakes had submitted an application to the state Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) for grant money, for a large grasslands restoration project in the Phantom Butte area. However, due to overwhelming requirements involved with staff managing six wildlife areas now, the SLWA manager rescinded the application.

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New Issues

Sage grouse were reintroduced to SLWA in 2008. This species was extirpated in Lincoln County sometime in 1988 or shortly thereafter. Two releases were done, in both spring and fall 2008, with a total of 30 birds set loose in this area. Another release occurred in spring 2009, with 28 birds successfully set loose in this area. At some point in the future, WDFW will determine whether the reintroduction has been successful enough to continue with further augmentation.

Major Stewardship Accomplishments

Rainbow trout have been planted in Swanson Lakes “Z-Lake” annually between 2004 and 2008. Some of the larger fish seem to have disappeared, however, by summer 2008. This lake continues to be popular with several fly fishermen out of the Spokane area, who are willing to brave the mile-long hike in, the ticks, and the snakes. The lake’s solar aeration system worked fine during the winter of 2008-09. However, high winds destroyed the turbine of the new windmill aeration system. SLWA staff has been working with a Spokane fly fishermen’s club to provide funding to replace the broken wind turbine with a sturdier model.

Approximately 150 riparian shrubs and trees were planted at Swanson Lakes in spring 2008, to replace mortalities in existing shrub/tree plots.

Both sharp-tailed and sage grouse were released at SLWA in 2008. Details can be found in the WDFW status reports for sharp-tailed grouse http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/research/papers/sharptail_grouse/columbian_sharptail08.htm, and for sage grouse http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/research/papers/sage_grouse/lewis_reintro08.html. Sharp-tailed grouse numbers have risen slightly, compared to 2007. The spring and fall 2008 sage grouse releases were the start of an attempt to reestablish a viable population of this species in Lincoln County.

Status Report of 2008 Performance Measures

Key performance measures are identified each year to monitor progress and identify any issues that might interfere with planned priority activities. This information will be used to delete, add or alter priority strategies for 2009.

2008 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2009 Related Activity/ Comments
Appropriate weed control on the wildlife area. Review the current year’s weed control activities, using generated reports and compare the efforts and success to the previous year’s weed control	Appropriate weed control completed. Accomplishments include: continued control of approximately 15 acres of whitetop, 140 acres of general weeds, less than one acre of St. John’s wort, and less than	We will continue weed control efforts in 2009. The seasonal weed control laborer will be employed for six months in 2009.

activities.	one acre of yellow toadflax.	
Continue augmentation of sharp-tailed grouse for the wildlife area's current population, and continue to monitor.	Augmented the sharp-tailed grouse population with birds from northern Utah and southeast Idaho, in April 2008. WDFW staff tracked these new birds, from the ground and aerially, throughout the year.	For 2009, large augmentation of grouse from SE Idaho was scheduled for April. Again, these birds were to be fitted with radio collars and tracked throughout the year.
As habitat surveys are conducted and analyzed, determine general trend of habitat quality. If quality is declining, attempt to determine cause of decline and develop plan to improve the habitat.	No Habitat Evaluation Procedure (HEP) surveys were performed at Swanson Lakes in 2008. These are often completed on five-year intervals.	No HEP surveys are scheduled at Swanson Lakes in 2009.
Maintain approximately 40 bluebird and kestrel boxes on the wildlife area.	Local volunteer has maintained, repaired and replaced boxes as needed, in spring 2008.	Local volunteer will continue to maintain, repair and replace boxes as needed in 2009.
Compare most recent population numbers of sharp-tailed grouse, to the previous years. If numbers continue to decline, consider additional future emphasis on habitat improvement and population augmentation, and pursue land purchase opportunities.	Total number of sharp-tailed grouse on Swanson Lakes WLA has risen slightly, possibly due to augmentation efforts.	Continue to survey leks and total up numbers of sharp-tailed grouse on/around Swanson Lakes in spring 2009.
In 2008, plant a total of approximately 150 riparian trees and shrubs, in three irrigated fenced plots.	These trees and shrubs were planted in one plot, to replace mortalities. One plot is irrigated with existing windmill; two are irrigated using solar powered pumps, with the solar arrays mounted on windmill towers.	Plans for 2009 include replacing 100 mortalities on the west end tree/shrub plot.

Updated Strategies

The wildlife area plan identifies many strategies or activities to address the agencies strategic plan goals and objectives, why the area was purchased, habitat conditions, species present and public issues and concerns. The following updated strategies have been added to respond to previously unaddressed or new issues or changes on the wildlife area. New strategies may also be in response to adaptive management as staff evaluate the impacts of past management activities.

No new issues were identified by the Citizens Advisory Group.

Agency Objective: Protect, restore and enhance fish and wildlife populations and their habitats.

1. Manage for upland birds

b. Strategy: Convert approximately 70 to 90 acres annually from old soil bank and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) single-species fields, and other former agricultural fields, back to native-like grasslands. Timeframe: spring to fall.

Delete Strategy:

(Although not technically changed, this strategy will not be funded in the future by BPA. These habitat conversions/restorations will depend on acquiring other funding sources, such as grant request currently in process, in the future. They will also depend on the availability of staff to complete the fieldwork.)

2009 Performance Measures

Performance measures for the Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area are listed below. Accomplishments and progress toward desired outcomes will be monitored and evaluated annually.

1. Appropriate weed control on the wildlife area, with focus on areas adjacent to roads and recently restored grass fields. Review the year's weed control work, using reports generated, and compare effort and success to previous years' weed control activities.

Weeds to be controlled, by species and acres treated:

Yellow toadflax – less than one acre

Diffuse knapweed – 5 acres

Whitetop – 15 acres

Canada thistle – 50 acres

St. John's wort – fewer than two acres

General weeds – 50 to 150 acres (this includes roadside and parking lot weed control)

2. Large-scale augmentation of sharp-tailed grouse to the wildlife area's current population was scheduled for 2009, with a goal of 30 birds to be released. Monitoring will include tracking

all sharp-tailed grouse with operating radio collars, spring lek surveys, and spring searches for new leks. Predator control will be addressed, with special coyote hunting opportunities for WDFW Master Hunters, and with federally authorized raptor trapping and translocation to non-prairie grouse areas.

3. Maintain existing habitat restoration sites, including approximately 900 acres of restored grasslands, two food plots, and four tree/shrub plots.
4. Evaluate, and maintain as appropriate, fire protection contracts with Lincoln County Fire Protection District's; renew the one agricultural lease on Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area.
5. Maintain and fill nine upland bird feeders on the wildlife area.
6. Maintain approximately 40 bluebird and kestrel boxes on the wildlife area.
7. Monitor annual use of the wildlife area, by members of the public, including hunters, birders, and other visitors. Work with Lake Roosevelt Forum (LRF) to put on annual wildlife area spring field trips for regional schoolchildren.
8. Maintain existing infrastructure, including buildings, fences, roads, parking areas, kiosk, etc.
Buildings: office complex – office, shops, barn
Fence: 60 miles
Roads: 10 miles, both dirt and gravel
Six parking areas
One kiosk with vault toilet
9. As appropriate, consider additional future emphasis on sharp-tailed grouse habitat improvement and population augmentation, and pursue land purchases.
10. Administrative duties: Complete all BPA and WDFW required documentation, develop budget and manage expenditures, supervise assistant manager and seasonal weed control employee, manage inventory of expendable items and durable goods, meet safety requirements for all activities, ensure staff meets training and licensing requirements.

Citizens Advisory Group Input

Citizen Advisory Group Membership includes: Brian Miller, Spokane Audubon; Dave Hubbard, rancher; Gary Maurer, agriculture lessee; Ed Ladwig, rancher ; Kevin Hupp, County Weed Board; Jason Lowe, U.S. Bureau of Land Management ; Charlie Berg, big game hunter/businessman; John Phillips, Pheasants Forever/INWC; Dennis Bly, County Commissioner, Harrington; BJ Kieffer, Spokane Tribal biologist.

Citizens Advisory Group members were sent a copy of the draft 2009 plan update, for review and comments. As of May 31, 2009, comments include the following:

- The perennial issue of grazing: local ranchers would very much like to graze on Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area, as it has essentially been ungrazed for 11 to 15 years, depending on the parcel. Rationales include keeping wildfire fuel load down, and providing respite grazing after wildfire has eradicated vegetation on private pastures.

Response: These appear to be diametrically opposed premises. Regardless, as WDFW already has a pilot grazing program, WDFW lands would be best served by waiting for solid results from this pilot, before opening up any additional lands to grazing.

Information for BPA's Wildlife Mitigation Program

Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area is funded by the Bonneville Power Administration to mitigate for wildlife losses from the construction Grand Coulee Dam. By funding habitat enhancement for a set period of time, and maintenance and operation costs for the life of the project, BPA receives credit towards its mitigation obligation.

Progress towards this obligation is assessed through the use of periodic surveys based on standardized Habitat Evaluation Procedures for three focal species: sharp-tailed grouse, sage grouse, and mule deer. By measuring a variety of habitat features, HEP surveyors apply habitat models for each of the focal species to arrive at a numerical figure between 0 and 1 that quantifies the habitat quality for a particular focal species. This figure is known as a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI). This figure is then multiplied by the area habitat being evaluated (acres of shrub steppe, riparian, woodland, etc.) The result is expressed as a Habitat Unit (HU), which is the basic currency of HEP.

Reports/Proposals/Plans

Since 1993, the Bonneville Power Administration has provided funding for Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area. Consequently, numerous reports, funding proposals and annual work plans have been produced, most recently in January of 2009. By following the links below, the interested reader can find detailed information on a variety of topics that the wildlife area is engaged in.

General information on the Mitigation Project

2010-2012 Funding Proposal Narrative submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in January of 2009). <http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/proposal.asp?id=983>
This document contains detailed descriptions of the wildlife area's history, land purchases and rationale for mitigation and focal species.

Additional information describing BPA's role in mitigation and crediting can be found on the BPA web site: <http://www.efw.bpa.gov/IntegratedFWP/Wildlife.aspx>
<http://www.efw.bpa.gov/IntegratedFWP/wildlifecredit.aspx>

Management Activities

2010-2012 Funding Proposal Narrative submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in January of 2009

<http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/proposal.asp?id=983>

2010-2012 Funding Proposal submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in January of 2009. <http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/proposal.asp?id=983>

Both documents contain detailed descriptions of proposed management activities for the 2010-2012 time period including proposed budgets plus projected needs through 2018.

Monitoring and Evaluation

2010-2012 Funding Proposal Narrative submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in January of 2009. <http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2010/proposal.asp?id=983>

This link contains detailed descriptions and summation of wildlife surveys conducted on the area since 1994.

Acquisition Strategy

WDFW pursues an active acquisition program based on criteria described in management plans for sage and sharp-tailed grouse, and the internal Lands 20/20 review process. At this time, however, Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area has no parcels targeted for acquisition.

Funding Strategy

2010-2012 Funding Proposal submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in January of 2009. See link above for details. This document contains detailed descriptions of proposed management activities for the 2010-2012 time period including proposed budgets plus projected needs through 2018. Also contains detailed descriptions of work elements, capitol projects and cost-share opportunities and all projected budgets.

Want to see the full plan?

Go to -

http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/index.htm

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